



PRESS RELEASE

Secretary Vilsack Highlights USDA's Commitment to Future Generations in Agriculture

USDA and FFA sign Memorandum of Understanding at largest annual gathering of youth in agriculture

PUBLISHED: November 2, 2023

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INDIANAPOLIS, Nov. 2, 2023 – Today, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack addressed students, agricultural educators, and guests at the opening session of the 96th National FFA Convention and Expo before signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the organization formalizing a partnership to prepare more students for careers in food, agricultural science, natural resources, and related fields.

In his remarks, Secretary Vilsack shared USDA's vision to secure the future of American agriculture and opportunities for the next generation of agricultural leaders. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that farms of all sizes have the opportunity to succeed. This starts by transforming our agriculture system to one that lifts up small and mid-sized farms, strengthens local rural economies, and enhances our food security and safety to create value and opportunity for all producers and communities.

While at the convention, Secretary Vilsack and Scott Stump, chief executive officer of the National FFA Organization, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to underscore the Department's commitment to youth in agriculture.

"Yesterday, I joined President Biden on a family farm in Minnesota to highlight how the Biden-Harris Administration's investments are bringing new revenue to farms, increased economic development in rural towns and communities, and more opportunity throughout the country," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Visiting the National FFA Convention as my second stop on the Administration's Investing in Rural America Event Series was a

natural choice. Today's youth will help create tomorrow's food system, one that encourages all producers to succeed. The MOU signed today comes at a key time to strengthen USDA's involvement with the National FFA Organization and its valuable education mission. Through our partnership, we will continue working together to prepare young people to pursue careers in agriculture."

"At National FFA, we are preparing our students to be tomorrow's leaders in agriculture," said Scott Stump, chief executive officer of the National FFA Organization. "We are very appreciative of Secretary Vilsack's dedication to agricultural education and FFA. It is why we were honored to present him with the Honorary American FFA Degree. Through this MOU that we are signing today, USDA helps us continue growing the next generation of leaders as the industry continues to evolve. Together, we can engage today's youth and empower them to fill the needs in the agriculture talent pipeline. We look forward to our partnership and the ability to share our ideas with USDA."



Under the newly signed MOU, USDA commits to building awareness of the reach and importance of agriculture across multiple fields and disciplines, as well as communicating available USDA internship opportunities to the National FFA Organization members and alumni. USDA will also identify areas where a student or youth perspective may benefit USDA programs and resources and engage with FFA to provide such representation.

The National FFA Organization is a school-based national youth leadership development organization of more than 945,000 student members as part of 9,163 local FFA chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As the largest student-led organization in the nation, the National FFA Organization operates on local, state, and national levels. Under the MOU, the National FFA Organization agrees to attract, educate, inspire, and equip students with the tools needed to succeed. Approximately 70,000 FFA members and supporters are attending the convention.

This partnership builds on USDA's [many partnerships](#) to find solutions to the challenges facing rural and underserved communities and connect those communities to the education, tools, and resources available to them through USDA programs and initiatives. Learn more about USDA's work to support youth in agriculture at the [Youth in Agriculture](#) web page.

At the convention, Secretary Vilsack was also awarded the Honorary American FFA Degree. This award is bestowed upon individuals who have provided exceptional service on a national level to agriculture, agricultural education, or FFA. He also participated in a roundtable discussion with a group of young leaders in agriculture from across the country.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden–Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, promoting competition and fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate–smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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PRESS RELEASE

**Release No.:
0224.23**

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U.S. Department of Agriculture